(d) to what extent, both countries have agreed on various issues and whether any agreements have been signed; and

(e) if so, the details of the agreements?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (e) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) No, Sir.

(b) India and Iran already have a Joint Commission which meets regularly at the level of Foreign Ministers. Iranian Foreign Minister Or. Kamal Kharrazi visited New Delhi for the 14th meeting of the Joint Commission on 21-22 February, 2005.

(c) to (e) During the visit, the two sides discussed various bilateral economic, commercial, cultural and consular matters. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the outcome of 14th Joint Commission Meeting was signed by the two sides. Under the MOU, the two sides agreed to take concrete steps to further their cooperation in trade, industry, transport and communication, petroleum, agriculture & rural development, culture, science & technology and consular matters. It was agreed to pursue opportunities for greater cooperation *inter alia* in power sector, mining, small & medium enterprises sector, telecommunications, railways, tourism and Information Technology.

India and Iran also entered into a MOU for safeguarding of their common cultural heritage and have agreed to make matching contributions to a Joint Fund to preserve literature, historical works, cultural and artistic works etc.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, I don't want to ask any supplement. I am satisfied with the answer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Next Question.

Preparation of a Mega Road Project

*330. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry has prepared a mega project

worth Rs. 1 lakh 70 thousand crores to develop roads, by passes, express highways, etc.;

(b) if so, the details of the project;

(c) the details of districts/areas covered in the State of Andhra Pradesh in the said project; and

(d) whether this project is a part of the on-going North-South/East-West and Golden Quadrilateral Project under the NHDP?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) A presentation was made by the Planning Commission before the Committee on Infrastructure for the proposed programme for upgi adation of National Highways in the next seven years (2005-2012) at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,72,000 crore (including Rs. 75,000 crore from Private Participation). The presentation *inter alia* included development of National Highways, Bypasses, Expressways etc.

(c) Subsequent to the presentation made by the Planning Commission, the Government has approved upgradation of 4,000 km of National Highways on Build Operate & Transfer (BOT) basis under NHDP Phase IIIA and also approved preparation of Detailed Project Reports for 6,000 km of National Highways under NHDP Phase IIIB. In Andhra Pradesh, following stretches of National Highways had been identified under over all programme of NHDP Phase III.

SI. No.	NH No.	Stretch/Corridor	Lenth (km)
1	9	Hyderabad-Vijayawada-Machhlipatnam	240.5
2	18	Cuddapah-Mydukur-Kurnool	192.5
3	202	Hyderabad-Yadgiri	30.0
4	205	Tirupati-Tiruthani-Chennai	138.0

(d) The proposed programme is for development of National Highways beyond the portions of NHDP Phase I & II hitherto completed.

SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Sir, the project is proposed to be completed by 2012. Out of the total amount of Rs. 1,72,000 crores, Rs. 37,000 crores will come as budgetary support. So, every year, the budgetary support should be around Rs. 5,300 crores so as the project is completed. But if you look at the budgetary allocation for this year, it stands at just Rs. 1,400 crores plus Rs. 450 crores for the North-Eastern Region. And it comes to Rs. 1,800 crores. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to how he is going to meet this year's target with this meagre allocation.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: The amount of Rs. 1,72,000 crores was envisaged by the Planning Commission in a meeting presided over by the hon. Minister who is the Chairman of the Infrastructure Committee. It is only an approximate amount. It is not binding so far as the budgetary support is concerned. The Infrastructure Committee will take a view on this. It is only a proposed plan of action.

SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is true that the National Highways Authority of India, for implementing the Inter-State Highways Development Plan, is adopting a new method of bidding process. I would like to know whether it is also true that the new process of bidding was started for around 21,600 kms. of the North-South and East-West corridors. If yes, what are the reasons for a shift in the bidding process and what are the benefits that you are going to get with the new bidding process?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: The shift in the bidding process is to improve things because the Government is not able to invest hundred per cent of the money which is required for the development of National Highways. We will give a financial support of upto 40 per cent on projects wherever there is a viability gap. Wherever there is a gap, we will invest upto 40 per cent, not more than 40 per cent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.